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A
P L E A

Johnson (Edmund) et FOR

HUMANE REASON,

Shewing the Sufficiency of it in Mat-
ters of RELIGION,

In a LETTER to the

Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of
L O N D O N.

Edward Harwood.

*Est quidem vera lex recta ratio naturæ congruens, diffusa
in omnes, constans, sempiterna, quæ vocet ad offi-
cium jubendo; vetando, a fraude deterreat. Cicer.
de Repub. lib. 3. Fragment. Nilius legi Deus est
Inventor, Disceptor, fator. (de Rep.)*

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P L E A



HUMAN

Showing the Sufficiency of it in His-
tory of Religion

IN A LETTER to the

Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of
LONDON

By the Rev. John Keble, D.D.,
Canon of Salisbury, and Rector of
St. Andrew's, Holborn.

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A
P L E A

F O R

H U M A N E R E A O N, &c.

My Lord,



A V I N G carefully per-
used your Lordship's *se-*
cond Pastoral Letter to
the People of your Dio-
cese, occasion'd by some
late Writings, in which, your Lord-
ship says, it is asserted, " That Reason
" is a sufficient Guide in Matters of
" Religion, without the Help of Re-
" velation," I find your Lordship to
oppose that Principle universally,
without Regard to Men's having or
not having Opportunities of knowing

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p. 7. the revealed Will of God; nay asserting, and teaching your People "that Reason of itself is an *insufficient* Guide in Matters of Religion", without any Limitation; consequently that it is insufficient, after Men, who by God's Providence have no other Guide, have made the best Use of their Reason which in their Circumstances they were able to do.

This is the Doctrine of the Second Head of your Lordship's *Pastoral Letter*.

I know nothing of those Writings which your Lordship opposeth, but am verily convinc'd that your Lordship hath taught the People of your Diocese a Doctrine which is plainly derogatory to *Humane Reason*; and which by necessary Consequence destroys the Wisdom and Goodness of Divine Providence in the Government of Mankind; and is repugnant both to the Principles of *Natural Religion*, and to the Doctrine of the *Scriptures*.

Of this Consequence of your Lordship's Doctrine (which if you saw, I perswade my self you would abhor it, and reject the Principle from whence it followed) I shall endeavour to convince

vince your Lordship in some short Remarks on your *Pastoral Letter*.

Your Lordship tells your People, P. 1.
That the asserting *Reason to be a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, tends to persuade Men that they may, without Danger, or Inconvenience, lay aside and neglect the Gospel-Revelation*: And that wherever this Notion prevails, *the Work of Infidelity is effectually carried on*.

If the Assertion of the *Sufficiency of Humane Reason in Matters of Religion* had such a Tendency as your Lordship apprehends, it would indeed support the Cause of *Infidelity*: But sure it has no such natural Tendency, no such Tendency in itself; because indeed, on the contrary, *to lay aside, or neglect the Gospel-Revelation*, is to lay aside or neglect Natural Religion and Morality which *Reason* teacheth, and which is the *Foundation, the Substance and End* of the Gospel. P. 2.

Men therefore may argue for the *Sufficiency of Reason in Matters of Religion*, without *laying aside or neglecting* Christianity. They may confess that God had done what was *sufficient*

sufficient on his Part to bring Men to the Knowledge, and engage them to the Practice of true Religion and Righteousness, in giving them the Law and Rule of Natural Reason *written in their Hearts*; and yet may also thankfully acknowledge the greater and more effectual Light of the Gospel-Revelation. For Christianity is the most perfect and uncorrupted Reason, free from *Superstition* and *Immorality*, both which are repugnant to Reason; and where Men have Opportunities of knowing this revealed Will of God, Reason will naturally lead them to receive it, and enforce the Obligation of it upon them. But if Men have no Opportunity of being convinced of the Truth of the Scriptures, or of knowing what true Christianity is, or what the Gospel teacheth, as in *Pagan* or *Popish* Countries; their *Reason*, the natural revealed Will and Law of God, as it is the only Guide which the good Providence of God has afforded them, so it is *sufficient* to direct them in their Duty both towards God and Men: And if they follow the Light of it in a constant universal Practice of Piety and

Morality,

Morality, we may certainly conclude, from Christianity itself, that their Hopes of obtaining the Divine Mercy and Favour are not Groundless, tho' they are not so clearly ascertained to them as to Christians.

Christianity then was not *necessary* in Respect of the absolute *Insufficiency* of Humane Reason; (because Men might always have attended to Reason, if they would, as well as they may attend to the Doctrine of Christ; and an impartial Attendance and Obedience to the Dictates and Laws of Natural Reason would always have guided Men to Happiness, to Spiritual Happiness and the Favour of God, *as a Rewarder of all those who diligently seek him*;) but it was *necessary* only to display the great *Mercy* and *Goodness* of God in affording Men, (after they had wilfully corrupted and abused their Natural Reason; and made themselves unworthy of the extraordinary Knowledge of the Divine Will) the supernatural Light of Revelation, to lead them again into the Paths of that Reason which they had darkned and forsaken, through their wilful Sins and Transgressions of God's Law manifested

fested by the Light of Nature, and eternally Obligatory upon them as Creatures endued with rational moral Faculties ; and enforcing it by stronger Motives than mere Reason cou'd propose.

Had Reason in any Circumstances of Men been absolutely in itself *insufficient* in Matters of Religion, Men in those Circumstances, which they could not help, would have been excusable in their greatest Enormities, Superstitions and Immoralities, as being destitute, not through their own Fault, but the Necessity of their Circumstances, of a *sufficient* Guide in Matters of Religion. But this is to impeach both the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God in leaving Men for so many Ages under an unavoidable Necessity of Infidelity and Sin ; and Revelation would not, in this Case, have proceeded (as the Scripture teacheth us) from the mere Mercy and Goodness of God, as a more effectual Means, than mere Reason was, to reclaim the Wickedness, and reform the Superstition into which Mankind (thro' their own Fault) was fallen ; but it would have been necessary with Respect to God himself,

self, *i. e.* morally necessary to vindicate the Wisdom of his Providence, and his Goodness towards his Creatures, that they might not want *sufficient* Means (under any Circumstances which they could not help) of knowing and doing his Will, and thereby rendering themselves acceptable unto him. Hence it would unavoidably follow, that the Revelation of God's Will was necessary at all Times equally, and as soon as ever Reason ceased to be a *sufficient* Guide in Matters of Religion.

The Ground therefore of this Head of your Lordship's *Pastoral Letter* is plainly erroneous; and your Lordship is not aware how much by your reasoning you weaken the Obligation of Natural Religion, whilst you derogate from the *Sufficiency* of Humane Reason, which is the natural Will of God made known to all Men, and plead for the Necessity, the absolute Necessity of the Supernaturally revealed Will of God.

Having made this general Observation on what your Lordship hath premised in your Letter, I shall in a few brief Remarks endeavour to demon-

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strate the Errour of your Lordship's Doctrine, and shew that the Asserting the *Sufficiency* of Humane Reason in Matters of Religion, is so far from denying the Obligation of Christianity, or derogating from it, that it really tends to display God's Goodness in the Revelation of the Gospel; who, altho' he might justly have left Men to the mere Light of Natural Reason, which in itself was sufficient in all Circumstances to guide them to Virtue, and Happiness consequent to it, if they wilfully had not shut their Eyes to its Light, and rejected the Guidance of it; yet out of unspeakable Mercy and Benevolence to Man's degenerate State, afforded them the Light of his revealed Will, enforced with stronger Motives to Obedience than Reason alone could propose, thereby to render the Law of Natural Piety and Morality more effectual, by the Declaration of free Grace and Pardon unto Sinners, and the Assurance of future Rewards and Punishments clearly promulged in the Gospel Dispensation. In Conclusion, I will give your Lordship a direct and full Proof, both from Scripture and Reason,

[II]

Reason, of the *Sufficiency of Humane Reason in Matters of Religion.*

After your Lordship hath shewn the true and proper Use of Reason with regard to Revelation, you lay it down as your avowed Doctrine; “*That Reason, of itself, is an insufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.*”

Your Lordship is immediately aware of an Objection to be made against your Doctrine, from Humane Reason as originally implanted in Man *in a State of Innocence*; and you endeavour to obviate this Objection, by alledging that it is fallacious arguing from the first uncorrupted State *to the present corrupt State of Humane Nature*; and caution your People against this Argument.

But, my Lord, this Caution will do no Good against the Objection. The Appetites of our first Parents were (tho’ not corrupted with evil Opinions and Examples, the Degeneracy of after Times) prone to be inordinate, as Experience shew’d, by their yielding to the first Temptation to transgress God’s Law; yet their Reason was *sufficient* to have prevented their Fall. There perhaps was never since,

in the worst State of Mankind, a greater Instance of humane Corruption; and we may thence as well and truly argue, that *Adam's* Reason was not of itself a sufficient Guide, as that Humane Reason is not so in any other State or Circumstances.

p. 8.

Another fallacious way of arguing is, your Lordship thinks, That as Reason is our Guide in the Affairs of this Life, it may also be our Guide in Religion, and the Concerns of the next Life. Whereas in one, your Lordship adds, it has the Assistance of Sense, &c. but in the other it is left in great Measure to Conjecture and Speculation. Thus your Lordship depreciates Reason, as if the Knowledge and Obligation of Natural Religion, demonstrable strictly by Reason, was in great measure Conjecture and Speculation. On the direct contrary to your Lordship's Argument, Reason is a much more sure, and infallible Guide in Matters of Religion, than Sense is or can be in the Affairs of this Life. The Difference of Good and Evil, and the Obligation of natural Virtue and Piety, are as manifest as any Objects of Sense can be, and have that Certainty and Demonstration,

stration, which the others are not capable of.

What your Lordship next observes of Men's *attending more to things Temporal*, than to Things *Spiritual*, is no Argument at all against the *Sufficiency of Reason*, any more than it is against the *Sufficiency of the Gospel*, to whose Doctrine and Precepts we do not so much *attend*, as to worldly Views and Interests. And your Lordship presently arguing again, *That as to the Sufficiency of Reason to be a Guide in Religion, it is much the same Thing with Regard to the Generality of the World, whether Reason be incapable of framing a compleat Rule of Life, or the Generality be hindered by Pleasures, &c. from employing their Reason to frame it*; this arguing of your Lordship concludes as strongly (and I wonder your Lordship did not see it) against the Sufficiency of the Gospel; for sad Experience shows, that the greatest Part of Men who profess Christianity, are hindered by their Pleasures and worldly Considerations, from employing their Minds upon the Duties of revealed Religion; but your Lordship will

will not argue hence, that the Gospel is *uncapable* to be a Guide in Religion: And so neither should your Lordship have argued thus with regard to Humane Reason. Your Lordship is plainly guilty of fallacious arguing, tho' without intending it, whilst you are cautioning your People against it: And, my Lord, that which you say *is much the same Thing*, is very far from being the same Thing. For if Reason was *uncapable* of guiding Men in Matters of Religion, they would demonstrably be excusable for the *unreasonable* immoral Errors of their Life, as wanting the Power or Capacity of preventing them, and not having a sufficient Guide to Virtue and true Religion. But Men's not *employing* their Reason is quite another Thing; it is their own Fault, and renders them accountable for the Neglect or Abuse of it, and for the Errours and Vices proceeding from an unreasonable Conduct of Life. Men may be hindered by Pleasure, from doing the Duties of Religion; but they also need not suffer, and Reason always tells them they ought not to suffer, their Pleasures to be inordinate, and
to

to draw them to unreasonable Immoralities; and if they would employ it, it would be sufficient to reform all evil Practices and Errours. This your Lordship seems to acknowledge with Respect to Philosophers; but your Lordship thinks it *unfair to argue as if all Mankind were Philosophers*. p. 9.

If all Men were Philosophers, they might (as many, perhaps most of the Philosophers, did) not attend to the Dictates of Reason and Natural Morality: And without being Philosophers, (in respect of humane Learning) every one by employing his natural Reason in the best manner he was able, might and could not but see the Reasonableness and Obligation of Piety and Moral Duties; that He ought to worship his Creator; acknowledge and submit to his Providence, and be thankful for the Benefits of it; that he ought also to be Obedient to Governours for the Good

* Est quidem vera lex, recta ratio naturæ congruens, diffusa in omnes; constans, sempiterna, quæ vocet ad officium jubendo; vetando à fraude deterreat. Cicer. de Repub. Lib. 3. Fragment.

Erat enim Ratio profecta à rerum Natura, et ad rectè faciendum impellens, et à delicto avocans. Idem. de Leg. Lib. 2.

of

of Society ; to be righteous, just and charitable to Man his Fellow-Creature, be willing to do him all the Good he could, and abstain from all Injury and Violence ; that also he ought to use temperately the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Life. There never needed any subtile Reasoning to prove these plain ^b Duties which Nature taught and commanded ; and the Transgression of any of which is as repugnant to the plain Evidence and Dictates of Natural Reason, as it is to the revealed Will of God : And the Natural Obligation of all these Duties is ^c Eternal and Immutable, and therefore as strong as any Revelation can make them : And Happiness or Misery, Rewards or Punishments, attend Obedience or Disobedience to them with as much Cer-

^b Εἰ γὰρ τοῦν ἀρχόμεν ἄλλο, πῶς ἴδμεν ἡμᾶς ποιεῖν καὶ κοινῇ καλεῖσθαι, ἢ ἡμεῶν τὸ θεῖον, ἔστι φύσιν καὶ ἐκείνου καὶ χάριτας; Arrian. Epict. lib. 1. c. 17.

Hoc exigit ipsa Naturæ ratio, quæ est Lex divina et humana; cui parere qui velit, nunquam committere ut alienum appetat, et id quod alteri detraherit, sibi assumat. Cic. de Offic. lib. 3.

^c Legem, neque hominum ingeniis excogitatam, neque scitum aliquod esse populorum, sed æternum quiddam quod universum mundum regat. Cic. de Leg. lib. 2.

p. 9.

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no more an Argument against the *Sufficiency* of Humane Reason, than the like Differences of Opinion and wicked Errours maintained amongst Christians are an Argument of the *Insufficiency* of the Gospel.

As the Gospel in the latter Case is a Law and Rule to appeal to in all Differences of Opinion or Practice, which shews it to be a Sufficient Guide; so in the former Case Natural Reason is a Law and Rule to which Men might have always appealed, which also shews the Sufficiency of that. And as *Scripture* is Sufficient, by its plain and expresse Testimony, to determine all Opinions or Doctrines and Practices founded upon them which are necessary to be known or done, or which affect Man's Salvation on the Terms of the Gospel; so Reason is Sufficient by its clear and demonstrable Evidence to determine all Points of Natural Piety and Virtue, in which Man's natural moral Perfection and Happiness consists. And whatever Arguments can be brought from the actual Immorality and Superstition of Men, in any Heathen State, to prove the *Insufficiency* of
Reason

Reason in Matters of Religion, will conclude with equal Strength against the *Sufficiency* of the *Scriptures*; because Men are vicious and superstitious (perhaps as much so as the worst Heathens) under the Light and Profession of Christianity: And therefore to say that the Light of Reason and the *natural Precepts of Morality* are not a *Sufficient Guide* to render Men's Actions acceptable to God (who hath given them Reason only for their Guide) is, no doubt, by necessary Consequence a *Disregard* to the Evidence and Obligation of natural Morality and Religion, and to the Doctrine also of the *Scriptures* themselves, as will be proved hereafter.

P. 10.

The true Advantage of Christianity above mere Reason lies (not that Reason is of itself Insufficient to guide Men, which the *Scriptures* never suppose, but plainly the contrary, but) in its being a more powerful Means of promoting the Practice of true Religion and Godliness, by strengthening the Obligations of Natural Religion; by proposing that Assurance of the Pardon of Sin (without any Punishment of the Sinner) which

mere Reason could not make certain unto Men; and by the Promise of greater Rewards hereafter for Continuance in well-doing, than Reason alone could make known unto them. In this respect Revelation was wanting to reform the general Corruption of Morality and Natural Religion; that is, it was wanting as a more effectual Means to this Purpose than mere Reason was. Yet it must be owned, that a future State of Rewards and Punishments is a Truth plainly deducible from *Reason*; from the Nature of the Soul itself considered as a moral Agent, and the unequal Distribution of Providence in the present State; also from the unchangeable Attributes of God, who being perfectly Holy and Good, cannot but approve and reward Virtue, and disapprove and punish Vice. No one can deny but Reason always had this intrinsic Evidence to enforce the Obligation of Natural Religion; and accordingly this Doctrine was taught by the wisest

To this Purpose *Socrates* in *Plato* speaks; Εἴτε τοι δαίμων ἤ τις καὶ ἄλλος ἀνθρώπων ἀγγέλλει ἢ οὐκ ἔστι τινα ἄλλοι ὅταν ὁ θεὸς ἐπιτιμῇ καὶ ὁρῶν. *Plat. in Apolog. Socrat.*

and

and best Philosophers, and generally believed by all Sorts of Men.

Your Lordship observes, That the p. 13.

Differences among Philosophers were in Points of the greatest Weight and Moment. But the Differences amongst

the several Sects of Christians being (as I shall shew presently) not of

less Weight or Moment, the one no

more proves that *Reason of itself is* p. 14.

not a Sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, than the other proves that the *Gospel of itself is not a Sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.*

I agree with your Lordship that the p. 14, 15.

Revelation of the Gospel excels the best Scheme of Natural Religion, that ever was or could be proposed; in declaring the Terms of sinful Men's Reconcilement with God, in demonstrating God's just Wrath and Indignation against Sin, in the very Manner and Method of shewing his Grace and Goodness to repenting Sinners, by appointing his beloved Son to die for them, and for his Sake promising free Pardon on the Condition of Repentance and Newness of Life. This Method of Divine Grace in the Revelation of the Gospel was not discove-

discoverable by Humane Reason, and is an unspeakable Comfort to sinful Men, and the greatest Encouragement possible to engage them to the Love of God and the Practice of all his Commandments. Tho' yet the Virtuous Heathen, who wanted this Assurance of free Pardon, had no Reason to *despond as to the Pardon of Sin and the Favour of God*, upon Repentance and Amendment of Life. Though Sin, he could not but know, was displeasing to God, as being contrary to the Essential Rectitude and Perfections of the Divine Nature, and to the Light of Reason which God had given him to be the Rule and Guide of his Actions; yet he could not but hope and strongly depend on the Divine Goodness for Pity and Mercy, when he had done all he could to cancel his former Transgressions by future Obedience: And he might be Secure that God, who knew the Imperfections of his Nature, would make Allowances for them, and for all great Temptations unto Sin; and would not deny him that Favour, and Happiness, which, by a Renovation and Purity of Mind
and

and Affections free from all unreasonable and immoral Habits, he had made himself capable of. What Punishment God in the Course of his providential Government might see fit to inflict for the actual Commission of Sin, tho' repented of, Man by Reason alone could not possibly find out; but yet the wisest Heathens, the *Pythagoreans* and *Platonists* assuredly depended upon the future Blessedness of good Men: And the *Stoicks*, (tho' uncertain of a future State, yet) were fixed in the Belief of the Happiness of vertuous Men, if God pleased to give them Existence in another State, to whose good providential Disposal they entirely resigned both their Souls and Bodies, not denying but he might restore them to a ^f new Life and Being. No serious or reasonable Heathens ever apprehended that Pious and Righteous (though sinful) Men would undergo Punishment, or fail of ^e Happiness in a future State.

^f Ἀλλὰ ὡς οὐδὲν ἀδύνατον καὶ ἡμεῖς μετὰ τὸ τελειοῦσθαι πάλιν περιόδῳ τινὶ εὐδαιμονίᾳ χρῶμεν, εἰς ὃν ἴσμεν ἀποκαταστήσασθαι ἡμῶν. Chrysip. citat. à Lactant. lib. 7.

^e Si maneat, beatos esse concedo. Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. 1.

With

With respect to Divine Worship all these agreed that the true Worship of the Deity was internal and a rational Service; that God was to be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth; and that a pure Heart and undefiled Conscience was better than Sacrifice. They indeed worshipped God by many Mediators, Dæmons and Heroes, not knowing the one true Mediator Jesus Christ; but in this Superstition they were more reasonable and excusable than the Papists, who have set up out of their own Imagination many Mediators in Contradiction to the one true Mediator whom they profess to know; or than those who worship him, whom they acknowledge to be the Mediator betwixt God and Man, as being himself the one Supreme God.

ἢ καὶ τὸ δεινὸν αὐτῶν, εἰ πρὸς τὰ δῶρα καὶ τὰς θυσίας ἀποβλέψουσιν ἡμῶν οἱ θεοί, ἀλλὰ μὴ πρὸς τὴν ψυχὴν, ἣν τις ὁσιῶσιν καὶ δίκαιοσιν ἀντιγχεῖται. Πολλὰ γὰρ μᾶλλον, οἶμαι, ἢ πρὸς τὰς πολυτελεῖς ταύτας πομπὰς τε καὶ θυσίας. Plato in Alcibiad. 2. Colitur autem non taurorum opimis corporibus contrucidatis, nec auro argentoque suspensio—sed pia & recta voluntate. Senec. Epist. 116.

The best Heathens also generally believed and taught the ¹ Assistance of Divine Grace to enable Men to be Vertuous and Good. This is the Scheme of Deism which was consistently and concurrently taught, by all Philosophers, but *Epicurean* Atheists and a few others of Atheistical Opinions.

Your Lordship observes, " That many of the greatest Note laid it down for a general Maxim, *That all Things were uncertain.*"

p. 16.

Your Lordship means the *new Academicks* of which Sect *Cicero* was, and whose Principle was to affirm nothing to be more than *probable*.

They did not really *doubt* of the Truth of those Things which they stiled only *probable*, but they would

¹ Nemo unquam vir magnus sine divino afflatu fuit. Cic.

Πάντα τὰ πρὸς τὴν κτῆσιν τῶν ἀγαθῶν συνελοῦσα διαβουλίαν ἐπιγρῆψαι ὁ λόγος, τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοκίνητον, καὶ τὴν τῷ θεῷ συνεργίαν. Hieroc. in Carm. Pythag. p. 233.

² Neque inter nos et eos, qui se scire arbitrantur, quicquam interest, nisi quòd illi non dubitant, quin ea vera sint, quæ defendunt; nos *probabilia* multa habemus, quæ *sequi* facile, *affirmare* vix possumus. Cic. Acad. Quæst. ferè in init. Lib. 2.

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not affirm the absolute *Certainty* of them.

With respect to the *Immortality* of the *Soul* and a *future State*, they were not so *doubtful* and *uncertain* as your Lordship represents them.

p. 17.

Tully says, That the Existence of the *Soul* in another *State* was the¹ concurrent Belief of all Nations; and in his first Book of *Tusculan Questions*, he produces great Variety of Arguments to prove the *Immortality* of it: And particularly relates of *Socrates*, That a little before he drank the fatal poisoned Cup^m, he expressed clearly and fully his Belief of a future *State*.

What *Socrates* said before to his Judges and Friends, which your Lordship mentions, shewed his great Humility, but not his Doubt of the Happiness of good Men in a future

¹ Permanere animos arbitramur consensu Nationum omnium. Tuscul. Quest. lib. 1.

^m Duas esse vias, duplicesque cursus animorum è corpore excedentium. Nam qui se humanis vitiis contaminassent iis devium quoddam iter esse seclum à Concilio Deorum: Qui autem se integros castosque servavissent—essentque in corporibus humanis vitam imitati Deorum, his ad illos, à quibus essent profecti, reditum facilem patere. Ibid.

State : And though he would not affirm the *Certainty* of it, yet ^a *Cicero* understands his Words as implying his Belief of it.

Your Lordship having related the different Opinions of Philosophers in Matters of Religion, adds ; “ That setting aside Revelation, no one Person at this Day has any Authority to *determine* which of the Philosophers was in the Right, and which in the Wrong. ”

p. 23.

What your Lordship means by *Authority* to determine Matters of Religion, I do not well understand. As every one has and always had *Authority* to judge for himself in Matters of Religion ; so it is, and was always easy to determine what Opinions are true or false in all the main Parts and Duties of Religion.

Sure it is not hard to determine by mere Reason, whether there is a *God* and *Providence* or not ; and whether *Moral Duties* are naturally obligatory or not. The Gospel has,

^a Si quod præter Deos negat scire quendam, id scit ipse utrum melius sit ; nam dixit ante : Sed sum illud, nihil ut affirmet, tenet ad extremum. Ibid.

and can have no more Authority to determine the Truth and Obligation of Religion, of Piety towards God, Righteousness towards Men, and Sobriety with Respect to our-selves, than natural Reason has. The Foundation of true Religion, and the great necessary Duties of it, are strictly demonstrable, and may be *determined* without any other Guide than Reason only.

p. 26.

Amongst other Opinions of the Philosophers which tend to encourage Vice and Wickedness, your Lordship chargeth a *famous Sect with the avowed Doctrine of Fate and Necessity* of Humane Actions. Your Lordship means the *Stoicks*. But this is a vulgar Errour which your Lordship with others hath fallen into. The *Stoicks* on the contrary were the great, if not the greatest Maintainers of *Humane Liberty* with Regard to *Action*. It was their avowed Doctrine that *Vertue* was *Self-sufficient* to Happiness, as being in every one's Power, and which no Accidents or Circumstances could hinder or deprive Men of; and therefore they equalled their wise Men to the Gods themselves, as being able, by a free unre-

unrestrained Power of vertuous Actions, to make themselves always happy. Their Notion of *Fate* was very consistent with human *free Agency*; with them it was no other than the established Law of Divine Providence respecting Humane Actions. Some few ignorant Astrologers amongst them indeed held the *Necessity* of Human Actions; but they were laughed at, and despised by all the Learned and Sober of that Sect.

But, my Lord, there is a famous Sect amongst Christians who hold the Doctrine of *Fate*; and that, by the irresistible Power and Will of God only, Men are predestinated to final Happiness or Misery: Which Doctrine takes away *Humane Liberty*, and tends naturally to destroy all Virtue and Religion.

Yet, my Lord, although this Doctrine has been, and is maintained by a great Number of Christians, and is by them insisted to be revealed and taught in the Scripture; I should think it unreasonable hence to infer, That *Scripture* is not of itself a *Sufficient Guide* in Matters of Religion; because Scripture, if impartially attended

tended to in the general Tenour of its Doctrine, and interpreted by the Rule of Reason, doth not teach, but is plainly inconsistent with this Doctrine.

P. 24.

Your Lordship proceeds to argue against the *Sufficiency* of Human Reason in Matters of Religion, alledging, "That the Matters wherein the
 " Philosophers differed, were Points
 " which concerned the very *Being*
 " of Religion and Vertue; and that
 " those Differences rendered the Motives and Obligations to both precarious and uncertain. And this
 " shews," your Lordship adds, "how
 " unjust the Objection is, which Infidels raise upon this Head, from
 " the different Opinions among Christians, and the several Sects and
 " Denominations formed upon these
 " Differences.—The Question therefore is not in General about a
 " Difference in Opinion—but about
 " the Weight and Importance of
 " the Things wherein Christians differ, and the Things wherein they
 " agree. And it will appear that
 " the several Denominations of Christians agree both in the Substance
 " of Religion, and in the necessary
 " Enforce-

“ forcements of the Practice of
“ it.”

I wish, my Lord, I could say that the Points, wherein Christians differ from each other, did not affect the *Being* of Religion and Vertue, and the Motives and Obligations to them, as much as those wherein the Philosophers differed from each other.

I think the Differences are really greater on the Side of Christians: And therefore I cannot but think that, although the Objection of Infidels against the *Sufficiency of Scripture* formed upon this Head is inconclusive and unjust, yet it is as just and strong and conclusive against the *Sufficiency* of the Gospel, as your Lordship's Arguments formed upon the same Head of Differences amongst Heathens are against the *Sufficiency* of Humane Reason.

Does not your Lordship think that the *Doctrine of absolute unconditionate Decrees* concerns the very *Being* of Vertue and Religion, and renders the Motives and Obligations to both precarious and even ineffectual? And what does your Lordship think of the Superstition and Idolatry of
Papists

Papists in worshipping *Images*, and *Saints*; and their depending upon the *Merits* of *Saints*, and *Priestly Absolution* (without real Conversion) for Pardon of Sin; their dispensing with *Oaths* and *Covenants*; and *uncharitable damning* of all who are not of their Communion; and their bloody Persecutions in Consequence of their Uncharitableness? Do not these wicked Doctrines and Practices subvert the very Foundation of Religion and Vertue, as much or more than the worst Opinions of Pagans ever did? So far are Christians from agreeing in the Substance of Religion. And as there were *Atheists* amongst the Philosophers, so there are, I fear, no fewer amongst the Professors of Christianity.

The Heathen Deists generally agreed in the Belief of one Supreme Self-existent Agent or God, and of his Providence in the Government of Mankind; of the natural unchange-

• Τάυτης τῆς δίκης ἔτι σὺ μέγιστος, ἔτι εἰ ἄλλο
ἐπιτέλειται περιγένοισθαι. — οὐ γὰρ ἀμνησθήσῃ ποτ' ὅτι αὐ-
τῆς οὐχ ἔτι σμικρὸς ἐν δύσει κατὰ τὸ τῆς γῆς βάθος
ἐνδὲς ὑψηλὸς γινόμενος εἰς τὸ οὐρανὸν ἀναστήσῃ. Τίς οὖν
αὐτῶν τῇ προσηύκεται τιμωρίαν, εἴτ' ἐνθάδε μένων, εἴτε
καὶ ἐν ἄλλῃ διασπενδῇ. Plat. de Leg. lib. 10.

able

able Obligations of ^p Virtue, and the ^a Displeasure of God against all Vice and Impiety: Of the ^a Duration or Immortality of the Soul after Death, and the ^a Rewards of Good, and Punishments of Evil Men. That God was to be worshipped with ^a Piety and Sincerity of Heart and Conscience; and Virtue to be practised not only for its own intrinsick Value and ^a Pleasure, but also in ^a Imitation of the Divine Example.

All but *Atheists* agreed in these great and necessary Points of Religion. But Christians disagree about the Fundamentals both of natural and

^p Est quidem vera lex, recta ratio natura congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna; quæ vocet ad officium jubendo; vetando a fraude deterreat. *Cic. de Repub. lib. 3. Fragm.*

^a Ἐστὶ δὲ μὴ λανθάνων τις θεὸς, ὃς ἅ δίκαιον θεοφιλὲς ἐστὶν, ὃ δὲ ἀδίκον θεομισῆς. *Plat. de Repub. lib. 10.*

See above, p. 26.

See above, p. 17, 26.

^t See above, p. 24. *Τυχὴς καθαρὰς τῶν δικαιοτάτων ἐστὶ γὰρ θεὸς οὐκ ἔχει.* *Hieroc. in Carm. Pythag. p. 25.*

^u Est autem unus dies bene & ex præceptis tuis actus peccanti immortalitati anteposendus. *Cic. Tusc. Quest. lib. 5.*

^z Οὐδ' ἂν ἐπὶ τοῦ θεοῦ πάντα ἀμειδιῖται, δεῖ δὲ ἀνὰ προθυμίαν ἰδίῳ δίκαιον γίγναι, & ἐπιτηδεύειν ἀρετῇ, εἰς ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπων ὁμοιωθῆναι θεῷ. *Plat. de Repub. lib. 10.*

Vitam imitati Deorum. *Cicer. Tusc. Quest. lib. 1.*

E

revealed

revealed Religion; as whether there are *three Supreme necessarily-existent, independent Agents* (i. e. *three Supreme Gods*) or *one Supreme, necessarily-existent, independent Agent*, (i. e. *one Supreme God*.) There are amongst Christians who contend that the primary Article of natural and revealed Religion, the Unity of God, can only be *probably* concluded from *Reason*, denying all *Demonstration* of it. The Author's Words are these: "That there is but *One God*, is *probably* argued from Reason and antient Tradition, and is *certainly* proved from *Scripture*. But that the *One God* is the Father *only*, exclusive of all other Persons, is not known by the Light of Nature to be true, but is known by the Light of Scripture to be false, and is by all the Antient Churches accounted *Heresy*." So much extravagant Falschood was scarce ever put together in so few Lines.

1st, The *Unity of God*, which is strictly demonstrable in Reason, is

Remarks on Dr. Clarke's Exposition of the Church-Catechism, p. 65.

boldly

boldly asserted to be *probable* only; and this for the Sake of a wretched Antichristian Hypothesis of three Supreme independent Agents pretended to be the Scripture-Notion of the *Unity* of God; but which indeed has not the least *Probability* in it either from *Scripture* or *Reason*, but is a manifest Contradiction to both.

2d. This Author weakly Affirms that the *Unity*, according to him, *probable* only in Reason, is *certainly* proved from *Scripture*: Whereas the Scripture always supposeth the Proof of the *Unity* from Natural Reason; nor can there possibly be so great a Proof of the Truth of the Scripture itself, as of the Unity of God from Reason; on the supposed Truth of which from Reason the Scripture is founded.

3d. It is a most presumptuous Falsehood in him to say, that it is from Scripture known to be false, That the One God is the Father *only*; as if he had never read, *John* xvii. 3. *1 Cor.* viii. 4, 6. *Ephes.* iv. 4, 5, 6. *1 Tim.* ii. 5. with many other Passages of Scripture.

4th. His saying that it is by all the Antient Churches accounted *Heresy*; is as vainly Romantick, as if he should have affirmed *Idolatry* or *Transubstantiation* to have been the Doctrine of all the Antient Churches. On the contrary it is most certain, and evident to any one who has the least Acquaintance with Antiquity, that it was the unanimous Faith of all the antient *Antenicens* and even *Nicene* Churches drawn from the Scripture, that the One Supreme God is the *Father* in Distinction to the Son and Spirit; neither of which Divine Persons are ever stiled the *One God*.

These are Differences, my Lord, which are of the greatest Moment to Religion; and would have been abhorred by every rational Heathen. An Heathen Deist would have been shocked at the hearing of *three Supreme Divine Agents*; and would have contemned and looked upon as Impious him who durst deny the *Certainty* of the *Unity of God*.

I find also, my Lord, that the same Author of the *Remarks* * prefers in-

* Remarks, p. 87.

stituted Rites to moral Vertue, stiling Obedience to Positive Precepts, Christian Perfection, as a Mark of the Preference of them to moral Vertue: And very absurdly says, That
" Moral Vertues are rather to be
" considered as a Means to an End,
" because they are previous Quali-
" cations for the Sacraments."

I would desire this Author to tell me what *Moral Vertues* are *previous Qualifications* in an Infant to receive *Baptism*. And with respect to the other Sacrament, tho' *Moral Vertues* are a *previous Qualification* to the right and worthy receiving of it, yet how does this prove them to be as *Means to an End*? Is barely receiving the Sacrament the *End* of Christian Perfection? Is it not the *End* of the Sacrament to engage all worthy Receivers of it to live in Obedience to the Moral Precepts of Piety and Vertue enjoyned in the Gospel? And is not the Christian Reward always promised to *Continuance in well-doing*; one instituted

Means of which is a constant worthy Receiving of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is a rational *Means* or Motive to engage all who thereby profess themselves Disciples of Christ, and to live in Union and Communion with him, to imitate the Virtues and Goodness of him, whose Death for their Sins they thankfully Commemorate?

But, my Lord, this Author's preposterous Distinction of *Moral Virtue*, and *Christian Perfection* as placed in *positive* Institutions, and which he prefers before the other, which is of Eternal and Immutable Obligation, is to teach, in Opposition to the Scripture, That *Sacrifice is better than Mercy*; and inverts the very Order of true Religion; and tends to weaken the Obligation and Necessity of Moral Virtue in Practice; and it is an easy Step from preferring Rites and Ceremonies to Moral Duties, to make them to serve instead of them, which is the Notorious Practice of *Popery*. And here, my Lord, let me add, That *Popery* having set up a pretended humane infallible Guide in
Matters

Matters of Religion, to support more effectually its gross Superstitions and Impieties, and tyrannical Impositions, the Scripture ceases to be a Rule amongst these Christians (if it be lawful to call Idolaters so) and there seems to be as much or more Need of a new Divine Authority to reform the Corruptions of the *Roman Church* (since the true Key of Christian Knowledge is taken away amongst them by a pretended Infalibility) than ever there was to reform the Corruptions of *Paganism*. And it is not unreasonable to think, that the Divine Providence will send some extraordinary Means to restore Christianity to that Church, whose Apostacy seems incurable by all ordinary Methods.

I hope it is not true, that, as your Lordship thinks, "Men shew a Zeal
" for Reason and Philosophy as their
" best Guides in Religion, in order
" to indulge their vicious Lusts and
" Desires." p. 27. 28.

The Indulgence of all vicious Lusts and Desires is as contrary to the Dictates of *Reason* and true *Philosophy*,

phy, as it is to the Precepts of the Gospel. And if such Men there are, they are as much Enemies to *Reason* as to *Scripture*; and may as well object to the Principles of *Natural Religion*, as to the Commandments of the *Gospel-Revelation*.

With respect to Heathen-Idolatry, and the impure Rites accompanying it, as corporal *Uncleanness*, and the Oblation of *Humane Sacrifices*, which your Lordship mentions as another Argument for the *Insufficiency* of *Humane Reason*; this certainly was the grossest Corruption of *Humane Reason*, and the most abominable Superstition. But gross and abominable as it was, it is equalled and even exceeded by the *Papish* Idolatry, which has prevailed for more than 900 Years through a great Part of the Christian World: And as great Lewdness has been committed amongst the *Papists* (as ever was known amongst *Heathens*) with Impunity; and esteemed so venial as to be bought off with Money. The bloody Persecutions and Massacres executed by *Papists*, are far more Cruel and Inhumane

mane than the Humane Sacrifices which Heathens offered to their Gods; and all this Barbarity and Murder is justified and defended by learned Men, and even Bodies of Men, who have declared it meritorious to commit Murder, and shed Humane Blood on Account of Religion.

So that, my Lord, if any superstitions or wicked Practices of Heathens, taught or committed against the Evidence and Obligation of Natural Reason, are a Proof that humane Reason is not of *itself* *Sufficient in Matters of Religion*, the like Superstitions and Enormities of the greatest Part of Christians inculcated and practised against the Truth and Precepts of the Gospel, will also prove, That the Gospel-Revelation is not of *itself* a *sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion*.

Your Lordship will not allow that the Instances of Corruption in Worship, Doctrine, and Practice, which have prevailed and do still prevail in several Parts of the Heathen World, were, or are owing to an undue Use

p. 35.

of Reason: " *This, you say, is in Effect to beg the Question.* " It is no more begging the Question than it is begging the Question to say, That the like Instances of Corruption in Worship, Doctrine, and Practice which have prevailed, and do still prevail in several Parts of the Christian World, were, or are *owing to an undue Use of the Gospel Revelation.* And this your Lordship does not think begging the Question. It is certain and evident, That the Errours and Impieties of Heathens were as contrary to Reason, as the same Errours and Impieties of Christians are contrary to Scripture; and owing as much in the one to their undue Use or Neglect of Reason, as in the other to their undue Use or Neglect of Scripture. Therefore, if in the one they prove the *Insufficiency of Reason*, in the other they will equally prove the *Insufficiency of Scripture*; and the *Sufficiency* of both must stand or fall together.

But as it does not follow from *Papish* Idolatry and Superstition, and the most wicked Antichristian Practices

ces founded upon them, that the Gospel in the present State of Things is *insufficient* in Matters of Religion, because Men may, if they will, attend to the Motives and Obligations of Christianity ; so because Men in like Manner might always have attended and acted agreeably to the known Motives and Obligations of *Reason* or *Natural Religion*, therefore Reason always was *sufficient*, though, through Men's own Faults, *ineffectual*, in Matters of Religion, as the Gospel likewise is.

To suppose *Reason in itself*, in any State or Circumstances an *insufficient* Guide, is directly to impeach the Author of Reason, and to excuse the Wickedness of Men in that State or those Circumstances. And the Truth is ; *Reason* always was a *Sufficient* Guide in Matters of Religion ; it always taught Men to worship God with pious Hearts and sincere Affections, and to do his Will by the Practice of moral Duties ; and no less taught them to expect his Favour and Approbation for their good Deeds ; and his Condemnation and

Punishment of evil Works. But thro' Men's own Faults and Perverseness in suffering their Appetites and Passions to prevail over their Reason, and their indulging vicious Affections and Desires in Opposition to the plain Dictates of natural Reason and Conscience, Reason became for the most Part *ineffectual*, both before and after the Revelation of the Gospel: And notwithstanding the greater Light and Influence of the Gospel above mere Reason, yet Men, after all, being left to themselves to do either Good or Evil by their own free Choice, Experience proves that the Scripture-Motives, and Light are not *effectual* to an Universal Reformation of Men's Manners. But it would be very erroneous thence to argue (as any Infidel may from your Lordship's Arguments against the *Sufficiency* of humane Reason) That the Gospel is an *insufficient Guide in Matters of Religion*. It is one Thing to say (which is true) that *Reason* is much enlightned and improved by the Manifestation of the Will of God in the *Gospel*; and another Thing

to affirm (which is not true) that Reason before that Revelation was *in itself insufficient* in Matters of Religion. The latter is saying that the natural Revelation of God's Will (by the Light of Reason) is an insufficient Guide; and consequently, That God did not afford Mankind, for many Ages, sufficient Means of knowing and doing his Will; consequently again, that Men were not under sufficient Obligations, or had sufficient Moral Power of performing Acts of Virtue and true Religion: And this Reasoning sufficiently absurd must end in the Supposition of Men's being *fatally* and *necessarily* drawn (through the *Insufficiency* of their Reason and Moral Power) to unreasonable Superstitions and Practices. This Consequence, I perswade my self, your Lordship will not admit, but how you will avoid it, I cannot see.

The Truth then is; *Reason* was weakened by the general Corruption of Manners which soon prevailed in the first State of the World; was more weakened by *Idolatry* and *Superstition*.

perstition when they arose : But as both Immorality and Idolatry were as plainly repugnant to *Natural Reason*, as they are to the *revealed Will* of God, Natural Reason cannot be said to be *insufficient* to reform them, any more than Christianity itself can be said to be *insufficient* to reform the Immorality and Superstition which prevails in the Christian World.

P. 40.

The Sense of this general Corruption made *Tully* complain of the Weakness of Humane Nature to guide itself without the *Instructions of Reason* and *Doctrines of Philosophy* ; but whom your Lordship cites as arguing with your Lordship for the absolute *Insufficiency of humane Reason* ; which is a great Mistake : For *Cicero* speaks there of mere^b untaught Nature which wants *Reason* and *Philosophy* to instruct and guide it, and to reform the Errors and Corruptions of it. And He

^b Si tales nos Natura genuisset, ut eam ipsam intueri et perspicere, eademque optimâ duce cursum vitæ conficere, possemus ; haud erat sanè quodd quicquam *rationem* ac *Doctrinam* requireret. *Tuscul. Quæst. lib. 3. in princip.*

is there (which your Lordship should have observed) very plain and express “ That the Minds of Men, if “ they are willing to be reformed “ and to obey the Precepts of Philosophers, without any Doubt may “ be reformed, *i. e.* by Philosophy or “ the Doctrine of *Reason*, as it follows,”

The true Preference of Christianity to mere natural Reason is (not that Reason in any State of Men is *insufficient* in itself to guide them to Vertue and Happiness, but) that Christianity is a clearer and more powerful Guide, having improved the Light of Reason by the supernatural Evidence and Declaration of God’s Will, and final Intention of saving Sinners by the *free* Pardon of them for the Sake and Merits of the Death of Christ, which mere Reason was not able to discover or determine: And which plain Declaration

“ Qui vero probari potest, ut sibi mederi animus non possit? cum et ipsam medicinam corporis animus invenerit?—Animi autem qui se sanari voluerint, præceptisque sapientium paruerint, sine ullâ dubitatione sanentur. Est profectò Animi Medicina Philosophia. Ibid.

of

of the Means of Man's Redemption is a more powerful Motive and Obligation to universal Obedience than Reason could ever with Certainty propose : Though Reason (if Men would have impartially attended to it) would always have given them sufficient Hopes and Security of their Acceptance with God upon their Repentance and sincere best Endeavours to do what was *right*, and *Good* and agreeable to Reason : And a future State of Rewards and Punishments was easily and naturally deducible, and even demonstrable from mere Reason. And I have the Pleasure to find, that your Lordship, though in Contradiction to your self, agrees with me that Reason alone is *Sufficient* to guide vertuous Heathens to the sure Mercy and Favour of God ; and therefore is *Sufficient* in Matters of Religion. Your Lordship's Words are ; " As to the Heathens, " though the Light of Reason is but " dim, yet they who have no better Light to walk by, and who honestly make Use of that as the only Guide God has given them, " *cannot*

" cannot fail to be mercifully dealt
 " with by Infinite *Justice* and Good-
 " nefs." If then they who have no
 other Guide but Reason, and honest-
 ly make Use of that, are sure of
 finding Mercy with God, as the *Just*
 and *Good* Governour of the World,
 what Pretence is there to argue that
 Reason is not *sufficient* in Matters
 of Religion? If Reason is *sufficient*
 for obtaining the Divine Favour and
 Acceptance, which is the End of the
 Practice of Vertue and Religion, it
 is evidently a *sufficient* Guide in Mat-
 ters of Religion.

In order to conclude this Debate
 with your Lordship, I shall, as I
 proposed, give your Lordship, a full
 and direct Proof, both from *Scripture*
 and *Reason*, of the *Sufficiency* of
 Humane Reason in Matters of Re-
 ligion.

I. It is the Doctrine of St. Peter,
 (Acts x. 34, 35.) *Of a Truth I per-
 ceive that God is no Respector of
 Persons, but in every Nation he that
 feareth him and worketh Righteous-
 ness is accepted of him.*

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Hence

Hence it appears, That in every Heathen Nation (of which the Apostle is speaking) they who following the Light of their Natural Reason and Conscience did *fear God*, i. e. worship him with truly Pious Affections and Sincerity of Heart; and performed Works of *Righteousness*, in Acts of Benevolence and Charity to others, were *accepted of him*; obtained his Favour and Mercy here, and would be rewarded by him hereafter.

Whence it follows that in the Judgment of the Apostle every Heathen, by the Light of natural Reason, had a *sufficient* Guide to lead him to the religious Fear or Worship of God, and to the Practice of those good Works which would be accepted and rewarded by God.

2. St. Paul is very exprefs (*Rom. ii. 10.*) that God will recompence the good Works of every Heathen with *Glory, Honour* and *Peace*; and that the Gentiles shall be rewarded or punished hereafter for their Obedience or Disobedience to the Law of Natural Reason and Conscience:
And

And this Law being plainly declared by the Apostle to be the Ground and Rule of their Absolution and Reward, or of their Condemnation and Punishment hereafter, it is manifest that, in want of the Knowledge of Revelation, he thought it to be a *Sufficient* Guide in Matters of Religion; and that their future Happiness and Misery as much depended upon their acting agreeably or contrary to the *natural Law written in their Hearts*, i. e. the Law of *Reason* and Conscience, as the Salvation or Condemnation of Christians depended upon their Obedience or Disobedience to the Law of the Gospel: Consequently that this Law of *Reason* by which they were to be finally judged, was a sufficient Guide (otherwise it could be no Law or Rule of Judgement) to those who knew not the Gospel, in Matters of Religion, and Salvation.

3. The same Apostle says, (*Heb. xi. 6.*) *He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek him.* The Belief of God's Providence in reward-

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ing Piety and good Works the Apostle supposeth to be a primary Article of Natural Religion; and that a Man cannot be a true Worshipper of God, upon the Principles of Natural Reason, without believing that God will reward those who faithfully serve and obey him. And if Reason, or the Law of Nature (which the Apostle here respecteth) has the Sanction of Rewards and Punishments annexed to it, as may be with Certainty concludcd by natural Reason from the Consideration of the Divine Attributes and Providence; and which is so certain in itself, that the Apostle here supposeth it to be the immediate and necessary Consequence of the Belief of God, and the Ground of Men's Worship of him; it must follow that Reason is of itself a *sufficient* Guide in Matters of Religion; since it leads Men to the Worship of God, and the Practice of Holiness and Goodness under the Belief and Assurance of their being rewarded according to their Works.

4. *Moses* says, (*Gen. i. 27.*) *God created Man in his own Image:* And *Solomon*, (*Ecclef. vii. 29.*) *God made Man upright.* The Meaning of both which Places taken together imports, that Man being endued with *rational moral* Faculties, in which he resembled the *moral* Perfections of his Creator, was *upright*, or *perfect* in his Kind, capable to fulfill the Duties and attain the End of his Creation. The End of Man being spiritual moral Happiness to be obtained by a right Use of his rational moral Faculties, which were given him to be the Guide and Rule of his Life and Actions, it must be supposed that *Reason* (which God gave him for his Guide and Rule) must be *sufficient* to direct him to those Duties which God required of him, and to conduct him to that Happiness which is the Natural Effect, or by God's Will the appointed Reward, of the Performance of them.

There is nothing wanting to make a Rule or Law *sufficient* to the End of its being a Rule or Law, but that it be plain and clear and easy to be under-

understood, and enforced with a sufficient Sanction of Rewards and Punishments. Now Reason always was such a Law to Mankind.

By the Light and Dictates of our rational Faculties, our Understanding and Judgement, we see the Difference of Things of a *moral*, as well as those of a *sensible* Nature; we see the Difference of Right and Wrong, Vertue and Vice, Good and Evil; and know that we are under an unchangeable Obligation to do what is righteous and good, and not to do what is unrighteous or evil. Reason teacheth every Man that he ought to worship God who made him and all the World, and to worship him with his Heart and Affections, without which all bodily Devotion is irrational and vain; and it teacheth him also to imitate the Divine Benevolence in Acts of Charity and Goodness to his Fellow-Creatures. This was always the plain Duty of Man. And howsoever Men might vainly speculate about a Multitude of inferior Deities, Angels and Mediators, and offer religious Services to them, yet

yet all (but Atheists) agreed in the Worship of one only Supreme perfectly Good Being, to whom they owed their Life and all the Benefits of it, and to whom they owned themselves accountable for all their ^d Actions. They evidently saw and were convinced, That Piety and Vertue tended to make them happy in this Life, both by their natural Effects, and the good Providence of God; and that, on the other Hand, Impiety and Vice were attended with Misery as the natural Consequence of them, as well as by the Judgement of God upon Sinners. And as Reason taught them that they were always under the Inspection, and in the Hands of God who created them, to do what he pleased with them? so it was Evident, That God would shew ^e Favour to those whose Actions were conformable to the essential Rectitude of his Nature, and therefore acceptable to him; and would punish the Unrighteousness of all evil Doers. On which Account good Men always hoped, and firmly believed to receive that

^d See above, p. 32, 33.

^e See above, p. 32.

Reward

Reward of their Vertue and Piety which the Author of their Nature in his allwise Providence should see fit to bestow upon them; and wicked Men always dreaded the Wrath of the Almighty on Account of their Iniquities, and expected to undergo a Condemnation and Punishment for their Sins and Impieties.

Whatever Men's Speculations were about the *Mortality* or *Immortality*, the *Materiality* or *Immateriality* of the Soul, it was still demonstrable in Reason, and none could deny, but God the Creator could continue the Existence of it as long as he pleased, and reward or punish Men, according to their Works, in what Manner and as long as he pleased. Accordingly the Generality of Men always in all Ages lived and acted under the Belief and Expectation of future Rewards and Punishments. This was the Sanction of the Law of Nature and Reason; and this was sufficient to keep up in Men's Minds a due Sense of their Duty to their Creator; to engage their Endeavours to do always what they knew was good in itself,

itself, and could not but be acceptable to him : To excite them to pray to him for Grace, and Pardon of Sins, to be *thankful* for all his Mercies to their Souls and Bodies, and to submit patiently to all his providential Dispensations ; and to endeavour in their Lives and Conversations to imitate the Example of his *Justice, Goodness, and Purity*, and to abstain from all Unrighteousness, and Impurity of Manners. Whatever Corruptions crept into this rational Scheme of natural Religion might easily be known and reformed, if Men would have attended to their Reason, and made that the Guide and Rule of their Behaviour.

Atheism was plainly repugnant to the clearest Principles of it ; and was accordingly condemned in all Ages by the Generality of Men, as much as it is now ; and all superstitious Impurity of Worship was no less evidently opposite to the first natural Notions of the Deity, as being most perfectly Pure and Holy. So that God never left himself without a

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Witness placed in Men's own Breasts to testify against their Impieties and Unrighteousness; and sufficient (if they did not wilfully reject its Guidance) to lead them to Vertue and Happiness.

5. If Humane Reason was not a sufficient Light and Guide in Matters of Religion, Man would not have been made *upright* or *perfect*: And having no other Guide, it must follow, either that moral Duties and Acts of Religion were not, and could not be required of him, as wanting *sufficient* Abilities to perform them; or that God required what he had not afforded Man *sufficient* Means to do; either of which are manifestly absurd: And therefore it necessarily follows that Reason, with the moral Power of Action with which Man was Originally endued, was *Sufficient* for him in all Matters of moral Duty and Religion.

And if Reason was originally *sufficient* to guide Man in Matters of Religion, it must continue to be so as well after the Transgression of
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our first Parents as before : And as their Fall did not prove the *Insufficiency* of Reason to have prevented it in *them*, so it cannot be a Proof of the *Insufficiency* of Reason, that it did not afterwards prevent Sin in their Posterity.

That which caused *Adam's* Sin, was the same Power of free Agency as that which caused the Sin of all other Men : And as *Adam* was left by God to act freely against the Light of Reason, or to act agreeably to it, so all his Posterity were left in the same State of *Freedom*. The Circumstances of Men, after the Fall of our first Parents, grew worse on Account of the ill Examples of some tempting others to Sin ; and administered more Temptations to it than our first Parents were liable to : But all immoral Transgressions being Violations of the plain Dictates of natural Reason and Conscience, and of God's Will known thereby, and being no less *freely* committed than the first Sin of Man, they proved the *Will* indeed to be corrupt and perverse, but still proved

no less the *Sufficiency* of *Reason*, whose Law Man might have observed, if he would, and which plainly condemned his Violation of it.

It is therefore demonstrably Evident, That the Wickedness and Impiety of Men did not in any Circumstances proceed from any *Necessity* or *Fatal* irresistible Power of their Appetites and Passions restraining or preventing the right Use of their *Reason*, or extinguishing their Knowledge of the Difference of Good and Evil, but only from the Obstinacy of their *Wills* in opposition to Reason; and nothing could destroy the *natural Sufficiency* of Reason whilst free Agency remained: And whenever Reason was rendered *insufficient*, it must either be by Extinction of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, *i. e.* by the Extinction of Reason itself; or else by the Destruction of humane *free Agency*; either of which would take away the Obligation of Religion and Morality, which must cease when the *Suf-*

Sufficiency of Humane Reason ceased.

The Truth then plainly is ; as Superstition and immoral Wickedness (through Men's Abuse of their Liberty and Reason) encreased, Reason was weakened by evil Customs and Habits ; *i. e.* those evil Habits disposed Men to be less attentive to Reason and the Natural Differences of Good and Evil. On this Account the Power of Reason became less *Effectual* to restrain the Impieties and Immoralities of Men ; God saw this, and permitted Men to follow their vain Imaginations ; and no Doubt considered also the Difficulties and Discouragements which lay in the Way of Vertue and true Piety, under a general Corruption of Religion and Manners ; and did not expect Degrees of Vertue and Goodness from them, greater than were well consistent with the unavoidable evil Circumstances and Temptations to Irreligion and Vice which they lay under, agreeably to the Apostle, *Acts* xvii. 30. If Men followed the best Light of Nature and Reason which

which they had, that being their only Guide, was *sufficient* to enable them to do all that was in their Circumstances required by God in Order to be accepted of him, and to attain that Happiness which they were capable of. And the Ground of God's communicating his Will to Mankind by Revelation, was not because the *Reason* which they had was in any Circumstances of itself not *sufficient* to direct him in Matters of Religion, when they made the best Use of it they were able; but because (through Men's being wanting to themselves and the right Use of their Reason) it was not so *Effectual* of itself to reform their Errours of Religion and corrupt Practices, as the enforcing of it by an exprefs Revelation would be. There was not a Necessity for God to give a new Rule of Life unto Men to vindicate the Justice of his Providence over them, and to render them accountable to him for their Actions, which the *Insufficiency* of Reason supposes; but Revelation was the pure Effect of the Divine

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vine Goodness in order to reclaim their Wickedness more *effectually*, and to restore their religious Worship to the Original uncorrupted rational Service of the Deity; by enforcing the Principles of Reason and Morality more powerfully by the express Sanction of future Rewards and Punishments: By the Promise of *free* Pardon and Grace, and the Assurance of future Happiness to repenting Sinners on the Conditions of the Gospel-Covenant to encourage their Well-doing; and by the Denunciation of future Condemnation and Misery to deter them from Evil-doing.

The Gospel-Revelation, like natural Reason in the first State of Man, was most Effectual in the primitive Times of the Church, whilst the *inspired* Apostles taught it, and wrought *Miracles* to confirm their Testimony of it.

But by Degrees Men's Lusts and Passions grew too strong for all the most powerful Motives of it, and as great a Degeneracy both of Religion and Manners arose and prevailed, and still

still continues, as was ever known in the darkest and worst State of *Paganism*. Yet this is not to be charged on the *Insufficiency* of the Gospel, but to Men's willful Disregard to the Doctrines and Precepts of it. And as *Scripture* is a *sufficient*, though (Experience shews) an *ineffectual* Guide (as to the greatest Part of Christians) in Matters of Religion; so *Reason* in like Manner (however it may have failed of its due Effect through the wilfully corrupt Hearts of Mankind) always was *sufficient* to teach Men their Duty, to convince them of the Obligation to perform it, and to encourage their Performance of it with the Assurance of obtaining a Reward.



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C O N C L U S I O N.

MY Zeal, my Lord, for *Reason*, that brightest and most glorious Ray of the *Divine*, and the *Perfection* of Humane Nature, has drawn the preceeding Observations from me. And as every Part of the Gospel-Revelation is perfectly agreeable to *Reason*, is founded upon the clear genuine Principles of it, pre-supposeth the Evidence and Truth of moral Reason or natural Religion, and teacheth nothing to be believed but what may be understood by *Reason*, or to be practised but the pure uncorrupted Dictates and Laws of *Reason*, or such Rites as it hath instituted as *rational* Means to promote spiritual and moral Duties, it is hence manifest that a Plea for the *Sufficiency* of Humane Reason in Matters of Religion (when Men had no other Guide to direct them) is far from derogating from the Excellency of revealed Religion, the highest and justest Commendation of which is,

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that it hath restored Reason (when grossly corrupted) to its Original Purity; and hath improved and rendered more Effectual the Dictates and Laws of it respecting our Duty to God, our Neighbour, and Ourselves, by stronger Motives and Enforcements than, when unassisted by Divine Revelation, it could propose to Mankind. This Plea likewise vindicates the Justice and Goodness of Divine Providence in the Government of Mankind for so many Ages by the mere Light and Dictates of Natural Reason and Conscience, which always were *Sufficient* (if Men would have duly attended to them, and suffered them to have their due Effect upon them) to shew them their Duty, and engage them to perform it. And the same Plea will always be a Vindication of the Gospel-Revelation, which, if Men will impartially enquire into the Truth of, they will find to be built on a rational and sure Foundation; and whose Doctrine and Precepts (if they will use their best Endeavours to understand and practise them as
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their only Rule and Guide) will always be *Sufficient* to enable them to avoid or to reform any gross immoral Errours, and to bring them, through the Knowledge and Practice of true Religion, to Happiness and Salvation.

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Your Lordship's

Obedient humble Servant, &c.

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